

QUESTION THE MESSAGE AT HOME

Media has a great deal of influence in our lives, and especially for youth. They are very “tuned in” to the media and to pop culture, at a time when they are trying to define who they are and how they fit in. You might be surprised how much they see, including the message from alcohol companies that are common on TV and radio, and in magazines and local stores.



HOW CAN I QUESTION THE MESSAGE?

Use these tools to begin questioning the media messages about alcohol for yourself, and with the young people in your life.

Question the Media!

Media is constructed and created, and a lot of thought goes into every detail. Being aware of this is the first step, but you can learn more by using the *Question Media!* handout.

- Keep this handout at home and the next time you watch TV or flip through a magazine with your child.
- Read through the questions and consider asking them when you see ads for alcohol on TV or in a magazine.
- Try filling out the questions with your child as an icebreaker to talking about alcohol use.



Product Placement

Consumers are affected by ads, but they are also able to tune it out or ignore them. In addition, the use of digital video recorders (like Tivo!) allows more and more people to fast-forward through commercials.

For these and other reasons, advertisers have turned to more subtle but effective methods, like product placement. This is where companies pay to have a product (brand name) appear in a TV show or movie.

How many times have you seen a Dell or Apple computer being used? Seen a specific type of car driven? How about a beer or liquor brand? The decision to show a brand is rarely a mistake, quite the contrary. Producers know that there is a profit to be made when a brand is shown.

- Use the *Product Placement Log* to track how many times you see drinking in a movie or TV show, and how many show actual brand names. You might just be surprised.



Retail Round-Up

When we think of ads most of us think of media, like TV or radio. But we often don't realize that the alcohol industry spends a lot of money at the retail level – places like grocery stores, convenience stores and gas stations – where youth shop weekly (see media facts). Most disturbing, is the fact that many of these in-store promotions are positioned at youth eye-level.

- The next time you visit a retail store with your child, use this as an opportunity to talk about the ads you see together.
- Ask whether they think the ad or in-store promo was made for adults or youth; question why the displays of beer are sitting on the floor at their eye-level; or, ask them to look at the type of promotional items that are offered by alcohol companies (logo t-shirts, hats, etc.).

For more activities ideas, check out the About this Campaign section of www.QuestiontheMessage.com. For tips on how to talk to youth about drinking, and for community resources, go to <http://healthvermont.gov> (Substance Abuse Programs/Prevention section).

Question the Media

Be In Control Of What Goes Into Your Head!



Media is constructed

A team of people creates media. Some of the positions include – directors, producers, writers, set designers, prop masters, publicists, photographers and art directors as well as many assistants.

Each media form is constructed using specific creative language

Movies, TV and magazines (and other media) use unique ways to create a message for a specific audience. Some techniques include, sound effects, music, camera angles, colors, words, lighting, editing, dramatic graphics, etc.

Media messages affect our thoughts and actions

Media is created to bring out an emotional response like fear, anger, love, longing, excitement, etc.

People experience messages differently

People translate messages based on their own culture, family and personal beliefs and values, lifestyles, interests and experiences.

Media messages have their own values and points of view

Messages are created to influence the audience to accept or understand a particular viewpoint. Usually, the “whole story” is not reflected. People can choose to accept or reject the values promoted in a message.

Question the Media

The following questions are based on the ideas listed above. They are the basic tools for exploring and understanding the impact that media plays in our lives.

Who created this message? Why? _____

Who is the target audience? _____

What creative language is used to attract my attention? _____

How does this message make me feel? _____

How might different people understand this message differently from me? _____

What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or left out, of the message? _____

Source: The Center for Media Literacy www.medialit.org.

Product Placement Log

Be In Control Of What Goes Into Your Head!



How many brand named products show up in your favorite movies or TV shows? Do you remember when you see someone drinking or if alcohol brands are displayed? You might be surprised at how many products *seem* to slip by us in a scene, and that's exactly what makes product placement so successful – it is subtle and fits naturally into TV and movie scenes.

Choose a favorite movie or TV program and see if you can list all the products you see either in the background, or that a character uses. Don't forget to note if you see alcohol use or an alcohol brand.

Name of TV Show or Movie _____

Date _____

Product (Brand) Names (list all)

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Characters Shown Drinking (circle number of characters)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Total Number of Times Drinking is Shown _____

Alcohol Brands Shown (list)

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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